

London Yearly Meeting's Response to the Richmond Declaration, 1887: A Case Study in the Avoidance of Religious Schism

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Abstract

London Yearly Meeting's response to the Richmond Declaration of 1887 was neutral in that it neither endorsed nor rejected it. The Declaration was seen by British Friends in a variety of ways. These included it being viewed as either an affirmation or not of existing Quaker beliefs, a document that was more relevant to the American Quaker context, a useful statement of beliefs or an attempt to impose a creed. While failure to accept the Declaration has been interpreted as a move towards supporting an emerging liberal Quakerism, the decision to also not reject it has often been overlooked. An evaluation of the discussions about the Declaration that took place at the Yearly Meeting in London, May 1888, and which were reported in the Quaker journals *The British Friend* and *The Friend* (London), highlights the wide range of views that were held. It is proposed that the complex set of relationships that existed between different groups within London Yearly Meeting and the role played by key individuals determined a nuanced response to the Declaration which was sufficiently acceptable to all sides. Paradoxically, this unity was founded upon a collective acceptance of theological discordance within London Yearly Meeting. Consequently, schism was avoided as evangelical, conservative and liberal Quaker narratives were able to coexist alongside a non-committal response to the Declaration.

Keywords

London Yearly Meeting, Richmond Conference, Richmond Declaration, Theological discordance, Schism, Spiritual authority

Introduction

The Richmond Conference¹ took place in Richmond, Indiana from 23 to 27 September 1887. Ninety-five delegates attended from all ten of the North American Orthodox ('Gurneyite') Yearly Meetings, and from London and Dublin Yearly Meetings. Representatives from Philadelphia Yearly Meeting (Orthodox) were also present, but in an unofficial capacity. There was no representation from Conservative, Wilburite or Hicksite Yearly Meetings.² The six delegates from London Yearly Meeting³ who attended the Conference were Joseph Bevan Braithwaite, Sarah Satterthwaite Clark, Joseph Storrs Fry, George Gillett, Maria Richardson and Charles Brady.⁴

The Conference's agenda addressed six key questions, the first being: "Is it desirable that all the Yearly Meetings of Friends in the world should adopt one declaration of Christian doctrine?"⁵ The positive answer given to this question led to the creation of the 'Richmond Declaration of Faith' by the yearly meeting representatives. The Declaration contained 'those fundamental doctrines of Christian truth that have always been professed by our branch of the Church of Christ'.⁶

1 General Conference of Friends, *Proceedings, including Declaration of Christian Doctrine, of the General Conference of Friends, Held in Richmond Ind., U.S.A., 1887*. Published by direction of the Conference, Richmond, IN: Nicholson & Bro., 1887, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/hvd.32044038323275> [accessed 20/04/2021]. All subsequent footnote references to the General Conference of Friends have the same access date for <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/hvd.32044038323275>, and General Conference of Friends will be abbreviated to 'GCF'. A reported comment from the publication which is attributed to an individual will be referenced in the footnote by the page number(s) containing the comment and will not include the name/role of the individual, as this will have already been mentioned in the article's main text.

2 North American Quakerism had fragmented during the nineteenth century into different groups. Historians sometimes refer to Orthodox Yearly Meetings as being 'Gurneyite' or 'Wilburite'; see P. Dandelion, *An Introduction to Quakerism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007, p. 7.

3 London Yearly Meeting was the authoritative body of The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain at this time; for further details see M. P. Abbott, M. E. Chijioke, P. Dandelion and J. W. Oliver Jr. (eds), *The A to Z of the Friends (Quakers)*, Lanham, MD: revised paperback edition; Scarecrow Press, 2006, pp. 159–60. Traditionally, yearly meetings hold an annual event which is also known as a 'yearly meeting'; for further details see P. Dandelion, *The Quakers: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008, p. 136. In this article the terms 'Quakers' and 'Friends' are used interchangeably. 'Society' is sometimes used as an abbreviated generic term for The Religious Society of Friends or within the context of discussing a particular yearly meeting.

4 GCF, *Proceedings, including Declaration of Christian Doctrine*, 1887, pp. 6–8. Charles Brady (p. 8) substituted for Marriage Wallis at the Conference (p. 6). Any citation or reference to 'Braithwaite' in this article refers to Joseph Bevan Braithwaite. Other individuals also called Braithwaite are differentiated through inclusion of additional name details.

5 GCF, *Proceedings, including Declaration of Christian Doctrine*, 1887, p. 18.

6 GCF, *Proceedings, including Declaration of Christian Doctrine*, 1887, p. 24. 'A Declaration of some of the Fundamental Principles of Christian Truth as held by the Religious Society

Although the London Yearly Meeting representatives at Richmond agreed to the formulation of the Declaration, in the discussions that preceded it Gillett⁷ and Fry⁸ expressed reservations. In contrast, Joseph Bevan Braithwaite, ‘widely recognized as a world spokesman for Orthodox Quakerism of the sort represented at Richmond’,⁹ took a leading role in drawing up the Declaration¹⁰ and was an enthusiastic advocate. The Richmond Conference had originally been called to help ‘promote unity in important matters of faith and practice, in the different bodies into which Friends in America are divided’,¹¹ and ‘its conclusions [were] to be only advisory’.¹² The London Yearly Meeting’s deputation report that was presented to its yearly meeting the following year also reiterated the latter.¹³ However, the question about the need for a common Declaration had been intended for “‘all the Yearly Meetings of Friends in the world’”¹⁴ not just in America. Similarly, the chairman towards the end of the Conference proceedings had also commented that it was intended ‘for the Society of Friends *the world over*’.¹⁵ The Declaration that had been adopted by the Conference was therefore not just meant for American Yearly Meetings even though Indiana Yearly Meeting’s Minute, which had originally suggested holding a conference, had primarily been for ‘our sister Yearly Meetings in America’.¹⁶ Braithwaite’s use of London Yearly Meeting Epistles and documentation from American Yearly Meetings¹⁷ to assist in formulating the Declaration had made this transatlantic connection even stronger. While the Conference therefore recognised the independence of the yearly meetings officially represented at Richmond, there was nevertheless a clear hope and expectation that each yearly meeting would subsequently adopt the Declaration.

of Friends’ (shortened in this article to ‘The Richmond Declaration’) can be found on pp. 24–43 of the GCF, *Proceedings, including Declaration of Christian Doctrine*, 1887, and refers to several areas of Christian doctrine, faith and practice.

7 GCF, *Proceedings, including Declaration of Christian Doctrine*, 1887, pp. 67 and 175–76. Gillett raised a concern that if a yearly meeting decided not to accept the Declaration this might cause disunity between the yearly meetings.

8 GCF, *Proceedings, including Declaration of Christian Doctrine*, 1887, pp. 68 and 301–02. Fry’s reservations included the Declaration being presented to yearly meetings as a predetermined statement without the opportunity for revision.

9 T. C. Kennedy, *British Quakerism 1860–1920: The Transformation of a Religious Community*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001, p. 112.

10 GCF, *Proceedings, including Declaration of Christian Doctrine*, 1887, p. 179.

11 GCF, *Proceedings, including Declaration of Christian Doctrine*, 1887, p. 4.

12 GCF, *Proceedings, including Declaration of Christian Doctrine*, 1887, p. 5.

13 London Yearly Meeting, *Extracts from the Minutes and Proceedings of the Yearly Meeting of Friends, held in London (Printed by direction of the Yearly Meeting,)* 1888, London: Charles Hoyland, 1888, p. 29.

14 GCF, *Proceedings, including Declaration of Christian Doctrine*, 1887, p. 18. Author’s emphasis.

15 GCF, *Proceedings, including Declaration of Christian Doctrine*, 1887, p. 305. Author’s emphasis.

16 GCF, *Proceedings, including Declaration of Christian Doctrine*, 1887, p. 5.

17 GCF, *Proceedings, including Declaration of Christian Doctrine*, 1887, p. 303.

In the months that followed several yearly meetings indicated their support of the Declaration, while others were more cautious and non-committal.¹⁸ However, as Gregory Hinshaw notes, in the yearly meetings ‘which represented not only the vast majority of Gurneyite Friends but also the majority of the world’s Quakers, the declaration was warmly received’.¹⁹ On 29 May 1888 London Yearly Meeting, at its annual yearly meeting, determined its response to the Declaration. The final decision it made was multifaceted. The conclusions from the Conference and the Declaration itself²⁰ were ‘to be printed with the Proceedings of the Yearly Meeting’²¹ but several reservations about the Declaration were commented upon. These highlighted the absence of discussion as to whether it was necessary to have such a declaratory statement in the first place, that the presentation of the Declaration as a finished article to yearly meetings meant that any possibility of amendment was prevented, and a general reluctance to take on any new statements of faith beyond what the Society had already said about its beliefs over the years.²² Nevertheless, in spite of these objections, it was also stated ‘whilst re-affirming our adherence to the fundamental scriptural doctrines always held by us, this Meeting refrains from expressing any judgment on the contents of the Declaration now produced.’²³ In other words, the decision had been made to step back from either affirming or disagreeing with the doctrinal statements contained within the Declaration. It will be argued that London Yearly Meeting’s desire to avoid schism was the primary driver in making this decision and, in order to achieve this, a collective decision to accept a significant level of theological discordance within its own community was used to maintain unity.

A Quaker Paradigm for Spiritual Authority: Placing the Richmond Declaration in Context

George Fox’s insight ‘that the Lord Christ Jesus was come to teach his people himself’²⁴ set Quakerism upon a distinctive christological trajectory across the religious landscape of seventeenth-century England. Within a few years

18 A summary of yearly meeting decisions can be found in M. Minear, *Richmond 1887: A Quaker Drama Unfolds*, Richmond, IN: Friends United Press, 1987, pp. 138–41.

19 G. P. Hinshaw, ‘Five Years Meeting and Friends United Meeting, 1887–2010’, in Angell, S. W. and Dandelion, P. (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Quaker Studies*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013, p. 95.

20 London Yearly Meeting, *Extracts from the Minutes and Proceedings*, 1888, p. 47.

21 London Yearly Meeting, *Extracts from the Minutes and Proceedings*, 1888, p. 48.

22 London Yearly Meeting, *Extracts from the Minutes and Proceedings*, 1888, p. 48.

23 London Yearly Meeting, *Extracts from the Minutes and Proceedings*, 1888, p. 48.

24 J. L. Nickalls (ed.), *The Journal of George Fox. A revised edition by John L. Nickalls with an epilogue by Henry J. Cadbury and an introduction by Geoffrey F. Nuttall*, Philadelphia, PA: Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends; London: Quaker Books, Britain Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, 2005 [1952], p. 107.

of its inception, the Quaker movement had become a sect²⁵ and had reached far beyond its origins in north-west England to other parts of Britain and the wider world, including North America. Its message was a radical one; spiritual authority did not lie in outward forms but inwardly, through a direct relationship that an individual can have with the Divine. The inward authority of Christ, the 'Light Within',²⁶ characterised and defined Quakerism. However, this also raises an important question. What happens if an individual's beliefs and actions which they perceive to be guided by the Light Within are at variance with the rest of the Quaker community? This became a pressing concern as various controversies²⁷ over this very issue threatened to destabilise the early Quaker movement. The answer to the problem which emerged was essentially twofold. First, while the Light Within has primary authority, it should not lead to actions that are contrary to Scripture. As Robert Barclay (1648–1690)²⁸ explained in his *Apology*, 'whatsoever doctrine is contrary unto their testimony, may therefore justly be rejected as false'.²⁹ Thus the Bible became an external benchmark for the leadings of the Light Within; it was still the case that Friends saw the Scriptures as secondary in authority to the immediate operation of the Holy Spirit, but nonetheless Barclay had forged an important connection between the inward and outward. Secondly, structures and procedures within the Society were put in place under the mantle of 'gospel order'³⁰ to help ensure a greater uniformity in belief and practice and, at the same time, nurture collective discernment.

The 'checks and balances' on the individual's leadings of the Light Within that were provided by Scripture, the Society's procedures and the collective discernment of the wider Quaker community were therefore of vital importance in establishing and maintaining unity. All of these can be seen as co-existing elements

25 D. Gwyn, 'Quakers, Eschatology and Time', in Angell, S. W. and Dandelion, P. (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Quaker Studies*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013, p. 207.

26 W. A. Cooper, *A Living Faith: An Historical and Comparative Study of Quaker Beliefs*, Richmond, IN: Friends United Press, 2001 [1990], pp. 16–17. 'Inner Light', which is often quoted nowadays, started to be used by liberal Quakers in the late nineteenth century. It has been argued that the two terms mean different things: for further details see Dandelion, P. and Angell, S. W., 'Introduction', in Angell, S. W. and Dandelion, P. (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Quaker Studies*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013, pp. 7–8.

27 Dandelion, *Introduction to Quakerism*, pp. 39–40 and 45.

28 D. Freiday, 'Barclay, Robert (1648–1690)', in Abbott, M. P., Chijioko, M. E., Dandelion, P. and Oliver, J. W. (eds), *The A to Z of the Friends (Quakers)*, Lanham, MD: revised paperback edition; Scarecrow Press, 2006, pp. 19–20.

29 R. Barclay, *An Apology for the True Christian Divinity, as the Same is Held Forth and Preached by the People Called, in Scorn, Quakers: Being a Full Explanation and Vindication of Their Principles and Doctrines*, Manchester: William Irwin, 1850, http://access.bl.uk/item/viewer/ark:/81055/vdc_100057440517.0x000001 [accessed 20/04/2021], pp. 35–36.

30 R. C. Allen, 'Restoration Quakerism, 1660–1691', in Angell, S. W. and Dandelion, P. (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Quaker Studies*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013, pp. 35–36.

within a 'Quaker paradigm for spiritual authority' and are held in dynamic tension with each other in the sense that if too much emphasis is placed on one at the expense of another there is a risk of significant disunity and potential schism. Before 1827 North American Quakerism had essentially presented a united front and yet, within a period of 60 years, it had experienced a series of disagreements, disownments and division over issues related to the nature of spiritual authority, including differences in emphasis given to the Light Within and the Scriptures.³¹ Hicksite, Orthodox, Gurneyite, Wilburite, Conservative and Congregational traditions³² had all emerged at different stages during this time with each claiming to represent an original form of Quakerism, although towards the end of the nineteenth century the Gurneyite Yearly Meetings still represented in numerical terms the largest Quaker grouping within America.³³ Every time a yearly meeting split, other yearly meetings had to decide which of the two newly formed yearly meetings they would officially recognise, even though to the outside world all the yearly meetings appeared Quaker.³⁴ London Yearly Meeting had been a constant ally to Orthodox and then Gurneyite Yearly Meetings throughout this period by remaining in correspondence with only these yearly meetings.³⁵ In contrast to the American Yearly Meetings, London Yearly Meeting appeared to have experienced relative harmony with fewer public expressions of disunity³⁶ and remained a relatively cohesive body during the nineteenth century. That is not to say there were no disagreements. Over the years, the Isaac Crewdson, John Sargent and David Duncan disputes³⁷ had certainly challenged the authority of London Yearly Meeting but, in spite of the exodus of some Friends from the Society in connection with these issues, major schism had been avoided.

The potential for further division within North American Quakerism still existed in the latter part of the nineteenth century. 'Renewal' and 'holiness' factions within the Orthodox grouping exposed additional differences about belief, practice and engagement with the wider world,³⁸ the possibility of Quaker

31 T. D. Hamm, 'Hicksite, Orthodox and Evangelical Quakerism, 1805–1887', in Angell, S. W. and Dandelion, P. (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Quaker Studies*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013, pp. 63–77.

32 T. D. Hamm, *The Quakers in America*, Bloomington, NY: Columbia University Press, 2003, pp. 39–54.

33 T. D. Hamm, *The Transformation of American Quakerism: Orthodox Friends, 1800–1907*, Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1988, p. 175, fn. 4.

34 T. D. Hamm, 'Hicksite, Orthodox, and Evangelical Quakerism, 1805–1887', in Angell, S. W. and Dandelion, P. (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Quaker Studies*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013, p. 67.

35 E. Bronner, "The Other Branch": *London Yearly Meeting and the Hicksites, 1827–1912*, Supplement 34 to the *Journal of the Friends' Historical Society*, London: Friends Historical Society, 1975, p. 52.

36 E. Isichei, *Victorian Quakers*, London: Oxford University Press, 1970, p. 66.

37 Dandelion, *Introduction to Quakerism*, pp. 93–95, 113–14 and 117–18 respectively.

38 Dandelion, *Introduction to Quakerism*, pp. 104–05.

ministers receiving water baptism was being advocated by David Updegraff and others,³⁹ and some Yearly Meetings, such as Iowa,⁴⁰ had started to use a pastoral system.⁴¹ And so, in an attempt to once and for all bring about uniformity, Indiana Yearly Meeting (Orthodox–Gurneyite) proposed that all Orthodox–Gurneyite Yearly Meetings in America, along with an invitation to London and Dublin Yearly Meetings, meet to discuss these issues and come to a common agreement; the Richmond Conference⁴² was this gathering.

The Response of British Friends to the Richmond Declaration

Discussions about the Richmond Declaration had begun even before the Yearly Meeting that was to be held in London in May 1888. In April of that year an article by Braithwaite appeared in *The Friends' Quarterly Examiner*. One of the comments he makes is in regard to how he sees British Quakerism and the wider Quaker world being inextricably linked together with London Yearly Meeting, 'the parent Yearly Meeting from which, in the ordering of Divine Providence, all the other Yearly Meetings have sprung',⁴³ meaning that for London Yearly Meeting this 'involves grave responsibilities' that it cannot ignore.⁴⁴ Even if, as Thomas Hamm suggests, London Yearly Meeting was perceived by some as 'the most influential of Yearly Meetings'⁴⁵ around the time of the emergence of Hicksism, the memoirs of Sunderland Gardner highlight that its role had not always been welcomed⁴⁶ and Edwin Bronner claims that in later decades its influence had declined.⁴⁷ For Braithwaite, however, maintaining unity between London Yearly Meeting and the yearly meetings it was in correspondence with was of paramount importance and accepting the Richmond Declaration was one way in which such unity could be preserved. Alongside this, Braithwaite tried to put the Declaration into a historical context, arguing that Friends had produced declarations before such as in response to the Hicksite schism⁴⁸ and therefore the idea of a declaration is nothing new. He also very strongly emphasised that

39 Hamm, *Transformation*, p. 133.

40 T. D. Hamm, 'The Divergent Paths of Iowa Quakers in the Nineteenth Century', *The Annals of Iowa* 61 (2002), pp. 125–50, <https://dx.doi.org/10.17077/0003-4827.10564> [accessed 20/04/2021], p. 144.

41 Hamm, *Transformation*, p. 127.

42 GCF, *Proceedings, including Declaration of Christian Doctrine*, 1887, p. 5.

43 J. B. Braithwaite, 'Notes on the Richmond Conference, 1887', *Friends' Quarterly Examiner* 22/86 (1888), pp. 272–88, at 273.

44 Braithwaite, 'Notes on the Richmond Conference, 1887', p. 273.

45 Hamm, 'Hicksite', p. 67.

46 S. P. Gardner, *Memoirs of the Life and Religious Labors of Sunderland P. Gardner*, Philadelphia, PA: Friends' Book Association, 1895, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/hvd.32044081819336> [accessed 20/04/2021], p. 285.

47 Bronner, "*The Other Branch*", p. 30.

48 Braithwaite, 'Notes on the Richmond Conference, 1887', pp. 278–79.

the Richmond Declaration was not creedal and neither would agreement to it somehow be necessary 'as a preliminary to Church membership, or to the holding of any office in connection with the Church'.⁴⁹ The latter is particularly revealing and highlights an attempt to deal with criticism that the Declaration could be divisive and used to disown members of London Yearly Meeting who could not agree with it. But, as Kennedy⁵⁰ highlights, other British Friends, such as Joseph Rowntree and John William Graham, saw things differently and were not in favour of the Declaration. Comments from some contributors to *The Friend* also reflected concerns, including how it 'would not conduce to the brotherly love and unity of our branch of Christ's Church'⁵¹ and that 'authorisation and acceptance of *any* creed is the utter abnegation of the first principles of Quakerism'.⁵² The scene was therefore set for a potentially charged Yearly Meeting gathering in London.

The 'minutes and proceedings' of the Yearly Meeting held in London in May 1888⁵³ do not contain records of the contributions made by individual Friends when discussions took place regarding the Richmond Declaration on 29 May. However, issues of the Quaker journals, *The British Friend* and *The Friend* (London),⁵⁴ contain what appear to be verbatim style accounts of what was said,⁵⁵ albeit other comments from attendee John William Graham about the duration of his contribution⁵⁶ suggest that these published records might have been summaries of what was said rather than necessarily 'word for word' records.⁵⁷ While there

49 Braithwaite, 'Notes on the Richmond Conference, 1887', p. 285.

50 Kennedy, *British Quakerism*, pp. 114–17.

51 H.F.W., 'V. (To the Editor of *The Friend*.)', *The Friend* (2 January 1888), p. 11.

52 E. Robinson, 'VII. (To the Editor of *The Friend*.)', *The Friend* (2 January 1888), p. 12.

53 London Yearly Meeting, *Extracts from the Minutes and Proceedings of the Yearly Meeting*, 1888.

54 Both of these periodicals began in 1843. *The Friend* was 'an evangelical journal, in counterpoint to the more conservative *British Friend*'; see Dandelion, *Introduction to Quakerism*, p. 130.

55 *The British Friend*, 'The Richmond Conference', 8 June 1888, pp. 152–57 and *The Friend*, 'Third-Day Morning, Fifth Month 29TH. (Joint Session of Men and Women Friends)', 9 June 1888, pp. 158–64. In subsequent footnotes *The British Friend* and *The Friend* will be abbreviated to *BF* and *TF* respectively. A reported comment attributed by the journal(s) to an individual (including the Clerk) will be referenced in the footnote by the issue and page number(s) of the journal containing the comment and will not include the name/role of the individual as this will have already been mentioned in the article's main text. Although both the journals use Quaker terminology for months of the year, modern nomenclature is used in the footnote references. For example, '6th month 8th' would be '8 June'.

56 J. W. Graham to Agnes [Graham], 31 May 1888, Box 7, JWGP quoted in Kennedy, *British Quakerism*, p. 117.

57 John William Graham's reported speech can be found in *TF*, 9 June 1888, p. 162 and *BF*, 8 June 1888, p. 156; the length of printed text suggests that this might be a shortened account, given how long Graham records he spoke for (see above).

are some discrepancies between the reports of the two journals,⁵⁸ overall there is a high degree of agreement. It is therefore fair to assume that they give a reliable summary of the proceedings that took place. They also give a fascinating insight into the diverse views and depth of feeling that existed among British Friends over this issue. Based on these accounts from *The British Friend* and *The Friend*, what can we deduce and ascertain about the discussions that took place at the Yearly Meeting in London about the Richmond Declaration?⁵⁹

Joseph Storrs Fry, the Clerk for London Yearly Meeting,⁶⁰ found himself in an unusual situation. Fry had attended the Richmond Conference and made known his concerns about the Declaration.⁶¹ He began by putting some ‘ground rules’ in place. As the role of the Clerk is to ascertain the ‘sense of the meeting’⁶² rather than direct it, it could be argued that he had taken an unusual step, but, as he also explained, ‘It would be affectation did we ignore the fact that a considerable difference of opinion has prevailed with regard to the declaration of faith.’⁶³ Although the Declaration from the Richmond Conference had been ‘sent to the Yearly Meetings for their consideration and adoption’,⁶⁴ Fry as the Clerk argued that ‘the word “adopt” is used as a sort of compromise with regard to the declaration’⁶⁵ and that as far as he was aware other yearly meetings have used a phrase such as “expressed their approval””.⁶⁶ He then made it clear that as the Clerk he did not feel it appropriate to ask the meeting to formally adopt the Declaration but instead ‘to consider how this document may be received in such a way as to be truly helpful to our valued Friends in America, and also

58 For example, on 29 May 1888 and before the draft minute had been read by the Clerk the *BF* (8 June 1888, pp. 152–57) reports the contributions of 55 individuals (excluding the Clerk) concerning the Richmond Declaration, compared to 53 individuals reported in *TF* (9 June 1888, pp. 158–64); the *BF*, 8 June 1888, p. 157 also included reference to contributions made by William Thompson and M. Clark that do not appear in *TF*. Some contributions, including those by Thomas Hodgkin and Theodore Neild, are more detailed in *TF*, 9 June 1888, pp. 160–61 than in *BF*, 8 June 1888, p. 155. There are also some small differences in naming some of the individuals who spoke (for example, ‘Ann Fardon Fowler’ and ‘Ann Ford Fowler’ in *BF*, 8 June 1888, p. 155 and *TF*, 9 June 1888, p. 161 respectively). Wording can also vary within a sentence; for example, see William S. Lean: ‘we decline to permit’ (*BF*, 8 June 1888, p. 154) and ‘we decline ... to promote’ (*TF*, 9 June 1888, p. 160).

59 Contributions are not necessarily discussed in the same order as reported in the *BF* and *TF*.

60 London Yearly Meeting, *Extracts from the Minutes and Proceedings*, 1888, p. 5. In addition to Joseph Storrs Fry being the Clerk, Charles Brady was one of the Assistants.

61 GCF, *Proceedings, including Declaration of Christian Doctrine*, 1887, pp. 301–02.

62 Abbott *et al.*, *The A to Z of the Friends (Quakers)*, p. 54.

63 *BF*, 8 June 1888, p. 153. Both the conclusions from the Richmond Conference and the Declaration had been read to the Meeting the day before: see *BF*, 8 June 1888, p. 152.

64 GCF, *Proceedings, including Declaration of Christian Doctrine*, 1887, p. 18.

65 *BF*, 8 June 1888, p. 153.

66 *BF*, 8 June 1888, p. 153.

for our own good'.⁶⁷ With these parameters in place the discernment process then began. The other five members of the Richmond deputation had the opportunity to speak first, followed by contributions from others as directed by the Clerk.

Whether the Declaration was considered to be a creed or not was undoubtedly a polarising issue among members of London Yearly Meeting. Braithwaite recognised the concerns that some Friends had about this, commenting that 'No such thought has ever entered our heart.'⁶⁸ In fact, he agrees with the opening comments that had been made by the Clerk but at the same time hopes 'nothing will be done which will in the least injure the testimony of this meeting to our living, risen, and ascended Saviour'.⁶⁹ Richard Littleboy⁷⁰ made the point that he did not see the Declaration as a creed just as he did not see the epistles and other texts in that way either, and, in a similar vein, Sarah S. Clark suggested that the idea of the Declaration being a creed was simply 'English-born'.⁷¹ When Herbert Nicholson finished his contribution by saying that 'He thought such a document was quite as necessary here as in America',⁷² *The Friend* reported that 'A number of Friends assented with—"So do I."⁷³ For those against the Declaration an undercurrent of concerns as to what might happen if it were accepted is also evident in several of the contributions that were made, with some speaking openly about the division and unrest it would cause. Ellen Robinson argued that if the Declaration was accepted 'it would alienate'⁷⁴ those who did not agree with it and 'separate them from those who should lead them in the highest paths'.⁷⁵ Jonathan B. Hodgkin commented that some 'would feel morally bound to lay down their position as officers in the Church, and perhaps to retire from membership altogether'⁷⁶ and William E. Turner spoke about how acceptance of the Declaration would be for 'many faithful Friends, older and younger, to whom such a limiting would be like a finger-post at the parting of the ways'.⁷⁷ It is noteworthy that several younger Friends⁷⁸ were not

67 *BF*, 8 June 1888, p. 153.

68 *BF*, 8 June 1888, p. 153.

69 *BF*, 8 June 1888, p. 153.

70 *BF*, 8 June 1888, p. 155.

71 *TF*, 9 June 1888, p. 159.

72 *TF*, 9 June 1888, p. 163.

73 *TF*, 9 June 1888, p. 163.

74 *TF*, 9 June 1888, p. 161.

75 *TF*, 9 June 1888, p. 161.

76 *TF*, 9 June 1888, p. 161.

77 *TF*, 9 June 1888, p. 162.

78 Examples of younger Friends who were not supportive/non-committal of accepting the Declaration include Theodore Neild, Ellen Robinson, John William Graham, Edward Grubb and J. Fyfe Stewart. A 'younger Friend' is defined as someone less than 50 years of age. The ages of the contributors to the discussions about the Richmond Declaration held on 29 May 1888 in London are not included in either *BF*, 8 June 1888, pp. 152–57 or *TF*,

supportive of the Declaration. Edward Grubb commented that at a time when scientific developments such as evolutionary theory were seen as challenging elements of religious doctrine, a detailed statement of belief was not necessarily something that they would wish to embrace, and asked if it was ‘likely to be fitted to the spiritual wants of to-day ...’.⁷⁹ All of these contributions reflected the divided position that London Yearly Meeting found itself in. The fracture lines that existed between the different Quaker groups (evangelical, conservative and emerging liberal traditions) within the yearly meeting were becoming wider and ever more apparent, and Alfred W. Bennett predicted that if the Declaration was accepted ‘There would be a flood of controversy all over the country, by which the life of this Society would be sapped.’⁸⁰

It is clear that the Richmond Declaration raised questions that went deep into the essence of British Quakerism. In addition to challenging the Society in terms of defining its beliefs, it also raised the important issue of London Yearly Meeting’s role in the wider Quaker world. If London Yearly Meeting moved away from accepting the Declaration this would also inevitably mean a distancing from the American Orthodox Yearly Meetings. Of course, it might also mean the possibility of re-engaging with the Hicksite ‘Other Branch’.⁸¹ Certainly some of those against the Declaration were, while speaking of their desire for the wellbeing of the American Yearly Meetings, also very clear that the needs of London Yearly Meeting should come first. Matilda Sturge articulates this sentiment by arguing that ‘Our first duty was to be true, and in the second place to be kind.’⁸² Ironically therefore, the Declaration that had been created to promote unity was having the unintended outcome of doing the exact opposite in terms of transatlantic Quaker relations.

Quaker Evangelical Moderates – ‘Bridge Makers’ for the Society

London Yearly Meeting was potentially in a ‘no win’ situation with regard to the Richmond Declaration. If the Declaration was accepted this would be the cue for both conservative and liberal Quakers to possibly consider their position within

9 June 1888, pp. 158–64, so this information for the examples cited has been collated from citations in Kennedy, *British Quakerism*. The assumption has been made that if the name in the journal(s) matches the name in this source then it is the same person, provided the dates indicate they were alive in 1888. The *estimated* age in years was calculated to be ‘1888 minus the person’s birth year’. The relevant page numbers cited in Kennedy, *British Quakerism*, used to estimate these ages were Theodore Neild (p. 149), Ellen Robinson (p. 154), John William Graham (p. 101), Edward Grubb (p. 115) and J. Fyfe Stewart (p. 144).

⁷⁹ *TF*, 9 June 1888, p. 162.

⁸⁰ *TF*, 9 June 1888, p. 163. Note that *BF*, 8 June 1888, p. 156 does not contain this quotation.

⁸¹ This is speculation but Bronner notes the involvement of Charles Brady and Sylvanus Thompson with Hicksite events: see Bronner, “*The Other Branch*”, pp. 35–36.

⁸² *BF*, 8 June 1888, p. 155.

the Society. Edward Grubb epitomised this dilemma. As a younger Friend, he was someone associated with both conservative⁸³ and liberal⁸⁴ strands of Quakerism. In his speech, Grubb emphasised how younger Quakers saw this as ‘a very serious crisis in the history of the Society’.⁸⁵ At the same time, it should be remembered that the main expression of London Yearly Meeting’s identity in this period was ‘evangelicalism’.⁸⁶ Consequently, it is reasonable to assume that, if the Declaration was rejected, many evangelical Quakers would be aggrieved. Additionally, it can be argued that there would also be the difficulty of positioning such a decision alongside the generally positive responses from the other yearly meetings and explaining how some of London Yearly Meeting’s documentation that was used by Braithwaite to help write the Declaration appeared to be redundant. Hence it is proposed that if schism was to be avoided ‘bridges’ would need to be built between these different groups.

In his study of London Yearly Meeting for the period 1857–73, Bronner proposed the existence of ‘a group of moderates in London Yearly Meeting which began to appear in the late 1850s and maintained a presence until the more visible and influential changes of the 1890s’.⁸⁷ These were Friends he characterised as being Christocentric in their beliefs, who considered both the Light Within and the Bible to be important, who were committed to maintaining Quaker distinctiveness, and who ‘willingly called themselves evangelical, but they rejected what one of them called “Evangelicalism”’.⁸⁸ Bronner identified and named 42 individuals he considered were ‘moderate’, of whom 18 were judged to be ‘active moderates’ and 24 ‘less active moderates’.⁸⁹ Of these 42 moderates, 19 were alive in 1888,⁹⁰ but it is not known how many

83 E. H. Milligan, “‘The Ancient Way’: The Conservative Tradition in Nineteenth Century British Quakerism”, *The Journal of the Friends’ Historical Society* 57/1 (1994), pp. 74–101, <https://journals.sas.ac.uk/fhs/issue/view/507> [accessed 20/04/2021], p. 97. Using the latter source, I have identified four Quaker conservatives (Joseph Armfield, William Graham, Charles Thompson and Edward Grubb – see Milligan, “‘The Ancient Way’”, pp. 81 and 97) who also contributed to the discussions about the Richmond Declaration (see *TF*, 9 June 1888, pp. 162–64); all were unsupportive/non-committal about the Declaration.

84 T. C. Kennedy, ‘The Quaker Renaissance and the Origins of the Modern British Peace Movement, 1895–1920’, *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies* 16/3 (1984), pp. 243–72, <https://doi.org/10.2307/4048756> [accessed 20/04/2021], p. 243.

85 *TF*, 9 June 1888, p. 162.

86 Dandelion, *Introduction to Quakerism*, p. 114.

87 E. Bronner, ‘Moderates in London Yearly Meeting, 1857–1873: Precursors of Quaker Liberals’, *Church History: Studies in Christianity and Culture* 59/3 (1990), pp. 356–71, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3167744> [accessed 20/04/2021], p. 370.

88 Bronner, ‘Moderates in London Yearly Meeting’, p. 364. “‘Evangelicalism’” within this quotation is cited by Bronner (footnote 37, p. 364) with reference to ‘Francis Frith, “‘Evangelicalism’ from the Stand-point of the Society of Friends,” (London, 1877)’.

89 Bronner, ‘Moderates in London Yearly Meeting’, p. 367.

90 The number of ‘moderates’ alive in 1888 has been extrapolated from Bronner’s information about them: Bronner, ‘Moderates in London Yearly Meeting’, p. 367.

actually attended the Yearly Meeting. However, analysis of the reports from *The Friend* and *The British Friend* indicate that six 'active moderates' (A.W. Bennett, James Clark, Thomas Hodgkin, William Scarnell Lean, William Pollard and William Tallack)⁹¹ and two 'less active moderates' (Fielden Thorp and William E. Turner)⁹² spoke at the Yearly Meeting about the Richmond Declaration.⁹³ Of course, between 1873 and 1888 it is possible that the theological views of any of these individuals may have changed in some way, but, irrespective of whether this might apply or not, it will be argued that they proved to be a significant influence in the discussions that took place.⁹⁴

William S. Lean's role was particularly important. After the contributions from members of the deputation who visited Richmond, he was the second next person to speak and gave several reasons why he was not in favour of the Declaration, including concerns that it might be used by yearly meetings to enforce uniformity of belief, that there were no means to make any amendments and that it would be wrong to believe its acceptance would promote greater unity between the yearly meetings.⁹⁵ Lean's beliefs are not necessarily at major variance with the contents of the Declaration, as he comments that 'In these 20 pages I know not if there be not 19 that I might perfectly accept',⁹⁶ while at the same time pointing out that he is not in complete agreement with all its aspects.⁹⁷ Nevertheless, he reaches the conclusion that he 'cannot see my way out of rejecting it',⁹⁸ although he is prepared to accept any final decision made by London Yearly Meeting. He made it very clear that in his judgement the Richmond Declaration was something that London Yearly Meeting should avoid becoming further engaged with; his suggestions include that the Declaration is not adopted and that 'we decline as a Yearly Meeting to promote any further use of this document'.⁹⁹ Lean's words had impact. Reports from *The Friend* and *The British Friend* indicate that eight of the subsequent contributors publicly aligned themselves with him (sometimes mentioning other Friends' names that they were in agreement with as well). These were Thomas Hodgkin ('active moderate'), Theodore Neild, William E. Turner ('less active moderate'), John Littleboy, Joseph B. Braithwaite, Jun., Walter Robson, Alfred Manser and James Reckitt.¹⁰⁰

91 Bronner, 'Moderates in London Yearly Meeting', p. 367.

92 Bronner, 'Moderates in London Yearly Meeting', p. 367.

93 *TF*, 9 June 1888, pp. 159–64.

94 For example, William Pollard was one of the authors of *A Reasonable Faith* (see Bronner, 'Moderates in London Yearly Meeting', p. 371).

95 *TF*, 9 June 1888, p. 160.

96 *BF*, 8 June 1888, p. 154.

97 *BF*, 8 June 1888, p. 154.

98 *BF*, 8 June 1888, p. 154.

99 *TF*, 9 June 1888, p. 160.

100 *TF*, 9 June 1888, pp. 160–64. Thomas Hodgkin 'agreed on the whole with William S. Lean' (see *TF*, 9 June 1888, p. 160).

Fielden Thorp had been identified by Bronner as a 'less active moderate'¹⁰¹ and his beliefs in the authority of the Bible¹⁰² would also indicate that he is within the evangelical grouping of Friends. In his contribution to the discussions at the Yearly Meeting, Thorp is reported as saying that he 'would have been glad if the meeting could have accepted the declaration',¹⁰³ but then went on to say if this was not possible then the Declaration should be received 'as part of the deputation's report, accompanying it perhaps with an expression of non-committal in regard to it'.¹⁰⁴ Thorp's initial response to the Declaration is therefore a positive one, but, recognising the sense of the meeting, he is prepared to move towards a compromise. This is a further example of how 'moderates' were prepared to try and find a resolution to the dilemma that London Yearly Meeting faced in how to respond to the Declaration. While Thorp's response is not the same as the one from Lean, it nevertheless had a similar effect in drawing support from others, namely Joseph S. Sewell, John Ashworth, Mary Steele and James Clark ('active moderate').¹⁰⁵ Of the other 'moderates' who spoke, only William Tallack was supportive of the Declaration in principle but at the same time was not in favour of its adoption.¹⁰⁶

It is suggested that the combined actions of Lean and Thorp meant that 14 Friends (including themselves) operated as a significant 'sphere of influence' over London Yearly Meeting's deliberations. Through their proposals they had begun to articulate the language that Joseph Storrs Fry would eventually use to write London Yearly Meeting's official response to the Declaration.

The Collective Acceptance of Theological Discordance to Avoid Religious Schism

In exploring the reasons for the American Quaker schisms, Pink Dandelion claims that 'If Quakers in Britain were to divide as completely as happened in America, it would have not been likely until after 1870'.¹⁰⁷ However, he goes on to make the point that the closeness of members within the British Quaker community, as a result of both family connections and geographical limitations, meant that such separation would be difficult.¹⁰⁸ The causes of

101 Bronner, 'Moderates in London Yearly Meeting', p. 367.

102 F. Thorp, 'Considerations on the Genuineness, Authenticity, and Divine Authority of Holy Scripture', *Friends' Quarterly Examiner* 2/5 (1868), pp. 71–104, 98.

103 *BF*, 8 June 1888, p. 157.

104 *BF*, 8 June 1888, p. 157.

105 *TF*, 9 June 1888, p. 164. For Joseph S. Sewell in the *BF*, 8 June 1888, p. 157 no reference is made to supporting Fielden Thorp.

106 *TF*, 9 June 1888, p. 161. For William Tallack in the *BF*, 8 June 1888, p. 155 no reference is made to not adopting the Declaration.

107 Dandelion, *Introduction to Quakerism*, p. 82.

108 Dandelion, *Introduction to Quakerism*, p. 82.

schism within yearly meetings may also go beyond doctrinal issues and include more worldly influences such as socio-economic factors, as Robert Doherty has evidenced.¹⁰⁹ Nonetheless, the spectre of schism within British Quakerism in the late nineteenth century for theological reasons was a possibility and the Richmond Declaration would have been a very strong candidate as the trigger for this. Why did it not happen?

Whether the Richmond Declaration was a creed or not is debatable, but either way it was certainly *perceived* by many as such or that it might be given similar authority to a creed. And yet London Yearly Meeting's decision about the Declaration included not wishing 'to adopt *any further declarations* than those previously made',¹¹⁰ which implies that it was neither creedal nor the first declaration the Society had used.¹¹¹ Ambiguity about 'doctrinal statements' is in further evidence when London Yearly Meeting's Epistle for that year included the statement 'Christianity is no theory, but fact.'¹¹² What this suggests is that a degree of 'theological discordance' existed within the Society that enabled different expressions of religious faith to coexist. The evangelical narrative drew primarily upon written statements of belief derived from the Scriptures,¹¹³ while the conservative and liberal narratives gave greater emphasis to the Light Within as their primary source of authority. The boundary line between these two narratives was therefore defined by both written language *and* direct inward experience. This enabled both narratives to be accommodated even though sometimes they were not in agreement. However, the Richmond Declaration had the effect in London Yearly Meeting of *emphasising the differences* between these two narratives, with the potential of turning the theological discordance that had been accepted by Friends into a form of polarised factionalism with the potential to cause schism. This is why London Yearly Meeting's response to the Declaration had to be very carefully worded so that unity rather than discord could be re-established through an understanding that a degree of theological difference was acceptable. Consequently, although the recorded decision mentions not adopting *additional* declaratory statements, it also includes, as noted by Bronner,¹¹⁴

109 R. W. Doherty, 'Religion and Society: The Hicksite Separation of 1827', *American Quarterly* 17/1 (1965), pp. 63–80, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2711337> [accessed 20/04/2021].

110 London Yearly Meeting, *Extracts from the Minutes and Proceedings*, 1888, p. 48. Author's emphasis.

111 See the 1693 'Declaration of Christian Doctrine' in London Yearly Meeting, *Book of Christian Discipline of the Religious Society of Friends in Great Britain; Consisting of Extracts on Doctrine, Practice and Church Government from the epistles and other documents issued under the sanction of the yearly meeting held in London from its first institution in 1672 to the year 1883*, London: Samuel Harris & Co, 1883, pp. 6–10.

112 London Yearly Meeting, *Extracts from the Minutes and Proceedings*, 1888, p. 57.

113 For example, London Yearly Meeting, *Extracts from the Minutes and Proceedings of the Yearly Meeting of Friends, Held in London (Printed by direction of the Yearly Meeting.) 1885*, London: Charles Hoyland, 1885, p. 30.

114 Bronner, "The Other Branch", pp. 37–38.

an *ongoing* commitment of ‘re-affirming our adherence to the fundamental scriptural doctrines always held by us’.¹¹⁵

For evangelicals, it would have been unthinkable for London Yearly Meeting to have officially rejected the Declaration. If this had happened it would have placed a major question mark over London Yearly Meeting’s previous doctrinal statements, seriously damaged relations with the American Orthodox Yearly Meetings and possibly initiated the most significant schism that British Quakerism would have ever experienced. In spite of some Friends calling for an outright rejection of the Declaration, a review of the recently adopted Society’s ‘Book of Christian Discipline’¹¹⁶ would have reminded them of the several orthodox and evangelical statements contained therein, such as the 1693 declaration, which includes statements such as ‘the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit are one, in divine being inseparable; one true, living, and eternal God, blessed for ever’.¹¹⁷ Given that Braithwaite drew upon the Society’s documental repository¹¹⁸ to help produce the Richmond Declaration, explicit rejection of the Declaration would, by default, be a serious attack on London Yearly Meeting’s own ‘Book of Discipline’. It is therefore argued that rejection of the Declaration, just like its adoption, would have taken theological discordance beyond its stretching point and with it the balance that existed between different groupings within London Yearly Meeting. This is why, after the draft minute had been offered to the Meeting by the Clerk, Joseph Bevan Braithwaite hoped that ‘Friends might be willing to accept what the Clerk had suggested’,¹¹⁹ although in reality for Braithwaite this was not the ideal outcome.¹²⁰

In contrast to a longstanding Quaker evangelical tradition within London Yearly Meeting during the nineteenth century,¹²¹ the emerging liberal perspective towards the end of the century was challenging the ‘established certainties’ of doctrine. Findings from Darwinian evolutionary theory and changes in biblical criticism were forcing many Friends to reinterpret the nature of their beliefs.¹²² Biblical authority had become less certain for liberal Quakers, whereas the concept of the Light Within gained greater prominence¹²³ and gave ‘a new sense

115 London Yearly Meeting, *Extracts from the Minutes and Proceedings*, 1888, p. 48.

116 London Yearly Meeting, *Book of Christian Discipline of the Religious Society of Friends in Great Britain; Consisting of Extracts on Doctrine, Practice and Church Government from the epistles and other documents issued under the sanction of the yearly meeting held in London from its first institution in 1672 to the year 1883*, London: Samuel Harris & Co, 1883.

117 London Yearly Meeting, *Book of Christian Discipline*, 1883, p. 6.

118 GCF, *Proceedings, including Declaration of Christian Doctrine*, 1887, pp. 279 and 303.

119 *BF*, 8 June 1888, p. 157.

120 Isichei, *Victorian Quakers*, p. 10.

121 Isichei, *Victorian Quakers*, p. 8.

122 Kennedy, ‘The Quaker Renaissance’, p. 248.

123 I. Packer, ‘Religion and the New Liberalism: The Rowntree Family, Quakerism, and Social Reform’, *Journal of British Studies* 42/2 (2003), pp. 236–57, <https://doi.org/10.1086/345607> [accessed 20/04/2021], p. 244.

of unique mission'.¹²⁴ These ideas had already begun to be formulated and shared among Friends. *A Reasonable Faith*,¹²⁵ which had been published anonymously by three Quakers (who were in fact Francis Frith, William Pollard and William Edward Turner),¹²⁶ spoke about those 'who are more or less dissatisfied with the religious Creeds and theological definitions with which they are familiar'.¹²⁷ Both Turner and Pollard also spoke at the Yearly Meeting in London¹²⁸ and expressed their concerns about the Declaration. *A Reasonable Faith* raised fundamental questions about the future direction of travel for the Society and highlighted a reality that liberal Quaker ideas were becoming more prevalent within London Yearly Meeting.

Elizabeth Isichei, in her study of the Society, suggests that the individualistic nature of 'Quaker polity'¹²⁹ is vulnerable to schism but that this may be reduced through the existence 'of a strong informal power concentration'.¹³⁰ The different groupings within London Yearly Meeting in 1888 are examples of the latter and operated as spheres of influence¹³¹ such that by neither accepting nor rejecting the Richmond Declaration it had been possible for these different groups to continue to coexist through a mutual acceptance of theological discordance.

Conclusion

The Richmond Declaration had brought London Yearly Meeting to a crossroads. The network of relationships that existed within British Quakerism had helped to ensure it could continue its journey in unity as a single religious community. Those who were prepared to bridge the divide between its different groupings played an especially important role in providing a cohesiveness to the collective body of Friends. William Scarnell Lean and Fielden Thorp have been identified as being an integral part of this process and were with others, important actors. Avoidance of schism was achieved by enabling evangelical, conservative and liberal counter-narratives to continue to operate together, although in the years

124 E. A. Isichei, 'From Sect to Denomination in English Quakerism, with Special Reference to the Nineteenth Century', *The British Journal of Sociology* 15/3 (1964), pp. 207–22, <https://doi.org/10.2307/588466> [accessed 20/04/2021], p. 217.

125 F. Frith, W. Pollard and W. E. Turner [attributed authors], *A Reasonable Faith: Short Religious Essays for the Times. By three "Friends"*, rev. edn; London: Macmillan and Co., 1885, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/hvd.32044020488482> [accessed 20/04/2021].

126 Isichei, *Victorian Quakers*, pp. 32–33.

127 Frith *et al.*, *A Reasonable Faith*, p. 1.

128 *BF*, 8 June 1888, pp. 155 and 157 respectively.

129 E. A. Isichei, 'Organisation and Power in the Society of Friends (1852–1859)', *Archives De Sociologie Des Religions* 10/19 (1965), pp. 31–49, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30120665> [accessed 20/04/2021], p. 40.

130 Isichei, 'Organisation and Power', p. 40.

131 Kennedy, *British Quakerism*, p. 115.

ahead liberal Quakerism would become uppermost.¹³² London Yearly Meeting had made a historic decision with lasting consequences that not only shaped the future of British Quakerism but also realigned its relationship with Gurneyite Yearly Meetings.

The Richmond Declaration had asked questions of the Quaker paradigm for spiritual authority and yearly meetings had given their answers regarding where they considered the balance should lie in the emphasis of Christocentric beliefs, the Light Within, Scripture and collective discernment. However, one ‘perplexing question’¹³³ for Quakers still remains not fully answered. Why did spiritual discernment about the Declaration lead Friends at Richmond and in London to different outcomes?

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132 T. D. Hamm and I. B. May, ‘Conflict and Transformation, 1808–1920’, in Angell, S. W. and Dandelion, P. (eds), *The Cambridge Companion to Quakerism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018, p. 42.

133 *TF*, 9 June 1888, p. 131. The author is most grateful for a suggestion made by one of the anonymous referees of this article that this question could also be considered within the broader research context of British evangelical Protestantism with particular regard to the Baptist ‘Downgrade Controversy’; see I. Randall, ‘Charles Haddon Spurgeon, the Pastors’ College and the Downgrade Controversy’, *Studies in Church History* 43 (2007), pp. 366–76, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S042420840000334X> [accessed 31/05/2021], p. 366.